

VZCZCXYZ0000
PP RUEHWEB

DE RUEHAK #0863/01 1030510
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 130510Z APR 07
FM AMEMBASSY ANKARA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1709
INFO RUEHTH/AMEMBASSY ATHENS 7981
RUEHKB/AMEMBASSY BAKU 1483
RUEHBM/AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST 0982
RUEHKV/AMEMBASSY KYIV 0017
RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW 5538
RUEHSQ/AMEMBASSY SKOPJE 0372
RUEHSF/AMEMBASSY SOFIA 1144
RUEHSI/AMEMBASSY TBILISI 3098
RUEHTI/AMEMBASSY TIRANA 0267
RUEHYE/AMEMBASSY YEREVAN 1281
RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL 2521
RUFPAAA/16AF ASEG AKINCI AB TU
RHMFISS/HQ USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC//JSJ3//
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
RUENAAA/SECNAV WASHDC
RUEHTH/USDAO ATHENS GR
RUFGAID/USCINCEUR INTEL VAIHINGEN GE
RUEHUP/USDAO BUDAPEST HU
RUEHSF/USDAO SOFIA BU
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO 5618

C O N F I D E N T I A L ANKARA 000863

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR EUR/SE
OSD FOR COL ALBERT ZACCOR

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/12/2022
TAGS: [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [MASS](#) [GG](#) [RO](#) [RS](#) [UP](#) [BU](#) [TU](#)
SUBJECT: MARE NOSTRUM? BLACK SEA MARITIME SECURITY AND
TURKISH LEADERSHIP AMBITIONS

REF: A. IIR 68980129 07
[1](#)B. IIR 68980042 07
[1](#)C. ANKARA 0804
[1](#)D. SOFIA 224

Classified By: Pol Mil Counselor Carl Siebentritt, reasons 14. (b/d)

Summary and Comment

[1](#)1. (C) Turkey seeks to maintain its leadership role in Black Sea maritime security but remains frustrated that not all six littoral countries are enthusiastic followers. Ankara complains of Romanian foot-dragging as the GOT seeks to add anti-WMD and anti-terrorism capabilities to BLACKSEAFOR. Ankara continues to seek U.S. help to encourage Romanian and Bulgarian participation in Operation Black Sea Harmony. Turkey sees a security role for a revitalized Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC), is gearing up to take over the BSEC chairmanship in May, and will host the organization's 15th anniversary summit in Istanbul in June. Turkish officials appear satisfied with the current low U.S. profile in the Black Sea, but many suspect the U.S. still wants to use the new allies as the vanguard of a wider NATO presence in the Black Sea in the future. End summary and comment.

Turkey's Black Sea Security Vision

[1](#)2. (C) Turkey's leadership in Black Sea maritime security is based on three principles: 1) the participation of all six

littoral states, 2) transparency in cooperation and communication, and 3) regional ownership of security initiatives and operations. Turkey wants to promote interoperability between the navies of the Black Sea coast states and increase the number of confidence building exercises. In the absence of "visible" security threats to Turkey's Black Sea coast, Turkish defense policy has been reoriented to deter potential terrorist attack, fight WMD proliferation, and counter weapons and drugs smuggling. Of prime importance to Turkey is the security of the Turkish Straits, with its high volume of commercial ship traffic, along with the protection of the Montreaux Convention which restricts access of non-littoral warships to the Black Sea.

Transforming BLACKSEAFOR

13. (C) Turkey is proud of its role in organizing the first operational multinational security force in the region and now seeks to transform BLACKSEAFOR to make it more effective and operational in character. Turkish experts are updating BLACKSEAFOR's Terms of Reference and developing a new MOU on information sharing among participants, with a view to expanding BLACKSEAFOR activities. According to the MFA, one concept paper proposes that BLACKSEAFOR take on additional capabilities to deter potential illicit WMD transit and terrorist threats in the Black Sea. Foreign Ministry officials assure us, however, that Turkey does not intend to transform BLACKSEAFOR into a standing force.

14. (C) Although all six Black Sea littorals currently participate in BLACKSEAFOR, not all share Turkey's enthusiasm for expanding its role. While the MFA believes that Russian participation has been "satisfactory," and even Georgian buy-in has been acceptable, given Georgia's limited naval capabilities, Turkish officials cite Romania in particular as slow to accept Ankara's vision. After a "reflection period" delay last year, Turkey has been waiting since January for Romania to announce the next experts meeting, while seeking to dispel any Romanian "confusion" about what Ankara is proposing.

15. (U) An on-call naval force created by Turkey in 2001, BLACKSEAFOR has been activated eight times with a minimum of four to six ships for periods of approximately one month for each Black Sea deployment. Since 2004, it has been called up twice annually. It is currently conducting exercises scheduled for April 6-24 in which ships will call on the Bulgarian port of Burgaz, the Romanian port of Constanta and on Istanbul. According to a statement from Turkish Naval Command, the current BLACKSEAFOR deployment includes the participation of one Turkish frigate.

Black Sea Dis-Harmony?

16. (C) Turkey is having difficulty convincing all the littorals to join in its second Black Sea security initiative, Operation Black Sea Harmony. Russia joined in December 2006 and Ukraine signed up in January 2007. Romania has indicated its intention to join but Turkish officials complain there has been no response yet from Bulgaria or Georgia. The MFA is cautiously optimistic that Sofia can be coaxed to follow Bucharest into OBSH this year, but says it is disappointed with Georgia's complete lack of response. It is not clear to Turkish officials whether Georgia's silence is based on political or technical reasons. Turkish military and Foreign Ministry officials have asked what the U.S. could do to encourage Romania and Bulgaria in particular to become active OBSH participants.

17. (C) Unlike BLACKSEAFOR, Black Sea Harmony is a continuously operating patrol force in the Black Sea. Founded by Turkey in March 2004, OBSH's objectives are to show a naval presence along the main merchant traffic routes,

carry out surveillance and reconnaissance and shadow select ships or suspicious activity. OBSH warships hail merchant vessels and obtain information regarding their ports of origin and destination as well as cargo. Air space surveillance is also conducted in selected areas. According to Turkish Navy figures, the highest percentage of "suspicious" vessels depart from Ukrainian, Romanian, and Russian ports, which are also the destinations of over 80 percent of "suspicious" maritime traffic in the Black Sea tracked since 2004.

¶8. (C) Turkish officials describe OBSH as the Black Sea affiliate operation of NATO's Active Endeavor in the Mediterranean. Data collected by OBSH on merchant shipping in the Black Sea, officials emphasize, is shared with NATO on a daily basis through the OBSH Permanent Coordination Center of Eregli, a Turkish Naval Station about 100 kms east of Istanbul. In response to our questions about how OBSH information sharing works now that Russian vessels are participating in operations, MFA officials acknowledge that

Turkey respects Russian caveats on sharing information with NATO.

Reviving BSEC

¶9. (C) While principally an economic organization founded under Turkish leadership in 1991 in the wake of the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) has an important security dimension today, according to the MFA. Ministry officials have told us that Turkey hopes to use its upcoming chairmanship of the BSEC to take advantage of the unique platform for dialogue between regional members as diverse as Albania and Armenia. Of the 12 members of BSEC, they note, three are NATO Allies and four are members of the EU. Officials claim that Turkey would welcome more EU involvement in Black Sea economic issues to help create "a new synergy." Turkey will attempt to breath new life into BSEC when it takes over the rotational chairmanship for six months in May and host the 15th anniversary summit in Istanbul on June 25 (ref c).

¶10. (C) Sources outside government are skeptical that Turkey can revitalize what is widely seen as a moribund organization. BSEC needs to be rescued, according to ASAM's Hasan Kanbolat, but he and others are not sure that Ankara's six-month chairmanship will be enough to do it. Although the organization has a permanent secretariat in Istanbul, it is a hollow structure. Turkey has never gotten much out of BSEC and will be hard-pressed to realize the lofty ambitions summit papers are expected to present, Kanbolat said. Regarding its potential to address regional security problems, TOBB University Professor Mustafa Aydin thinks BSEC does provide a platform for dialogue on security, but dampened expectations the GOT might have for serious progress at BSEC.

Visit Ankara's Classified Web Site at
<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/eur/ankara/>

WILSON